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# SHEKEL



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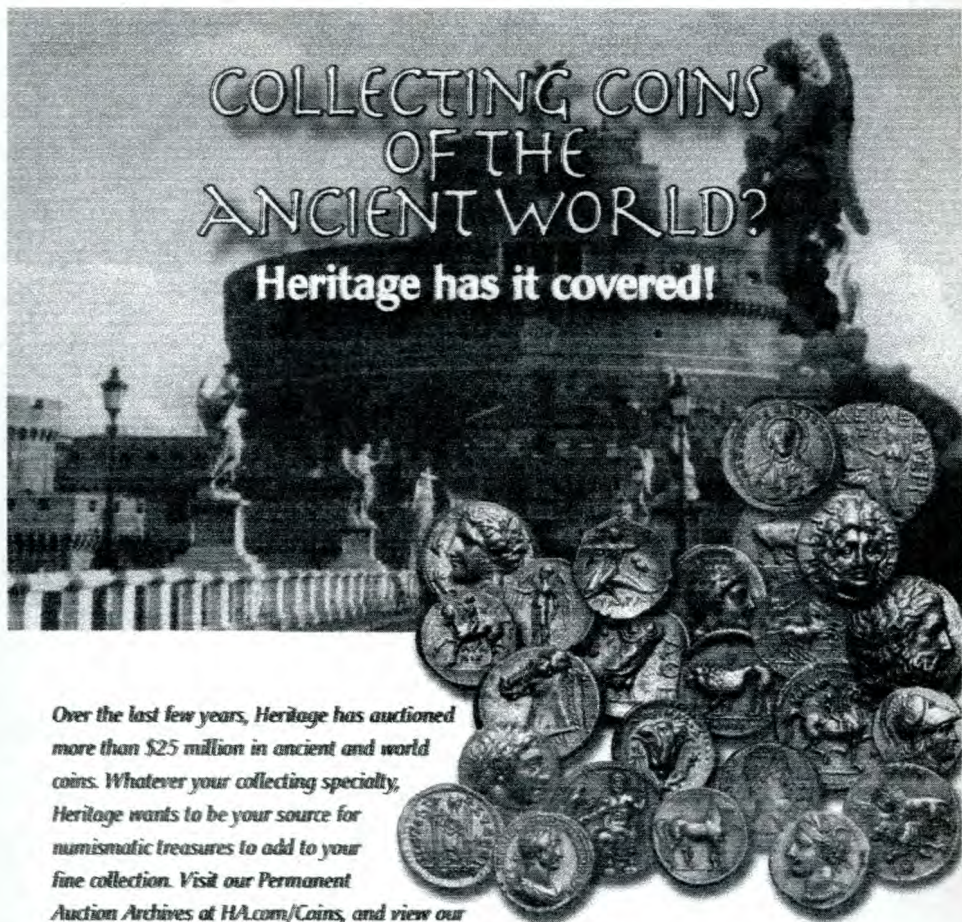
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November-December 2006

Edward Schuman, Editor

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The American Israel Numismatic Association (A.I.N.A.) is a cultural and educational organization dedicated to the study and collection of Israel's coinage, past and present, and all aspects of Judaic numismatics. A.I.N.A. is a democratically organized, membership oriented group, chartered as a not for profit association under the laws of The State of New York. A.I.N.A.'s primary purpose is the development of programs, publications, meetings and other activities which will bring news, history, social and related background to the study and collection of Judaic numismatics, and the advancement of the hobby. The Association supports a web page <http://amerisrael.com> in which full information about the organization and a sampling of past articles from the SHEKEL are shown. The Association attends national and regional conventions, sponsors study tours to Israel, publication of books and catalogs and other activities which will be of benefit to the members. A.I.N.A. supports Young Numismatists programs which encourage and introduce youth to our hobby. Audio-visual and slide programs are available from the A.I.N.A. archives on many Judaica subjects and are available at no cost except for transportation charges. Local Israel Numismatic Society chapters exist in several areas. Please write for further information.

The Association publishes the SHEKEL six times a year. It has been referred to as a Jewish Reader's Digest. The SHEKEL is a journal and news magazine prepared for the enlightenment and education of the membership. You are invited to submit an article for publication.

### **Annual Membership fees:**

U.S., Canada and Mexico \$18. - Foreign \$25. - Life \$300

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## President's Message

By Mel Wacks

The excitement about our hobby and organization has lasted for nearly 40 years, and should continue for the next 40 years ... and beyond. This has been due to both our loyal members and especially to those who have guided the organization through the years. Looking at the first issue of The Shekel (Spring 1968), one sees the names of two people who are still active - our Vice President was Ed Schuman, and I was on the Board of Directors. So Ed and I go back a long way.

In 1978, Ed became editor of The Shekel, a job with great responsibility and no pay. He has performed admirably for nearly 30 years, producing one of the best publications of any numismatic organization that is valued by our entire membership ... where they can read about over 2,500 years of Jewish and world history reflected in coins, medals, tokens, paper money, etc. from Israel and other countries. Ed also served in the dual capacity as editor and President of AINA from July 1979 through June 1980.

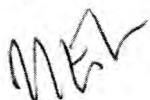
With this in mind, I reluctantly announce that Eddie is stepping down as editor after this issue. In behalf of the Board of Directors, our members, and Eddie's many friends I wish him the best of luck, and hope that he will be able to make occasional contributions in the pages of The Shekel in the future.

Florence Schuman, the other half of this dynamic duo, has been Treasurer since November 1992. She has put in countless hours servicing our members in a mostly thankless task. Florence is also stepping down and will be greatly missed.

I am pleased to announce that board member Simcha Kuritzky has agreed to be our new Treasurer. I hope members will make his job as easy as possible by sending dues, changes of address, etc. to our new mailing address: AINA, PO Box 13063, Silver Spring, MD 20911-3063 or email to [ainatreasurer@lycos.com](mailto:ainatreasurer@lycos.com).

If you ever have any questions or comments I invite you to call me at (818) 225-1348 and leave a message if I'm not there, or email me at [ainapresident@lycos.com](mailto:ainapresident@lycos.com).

Happy Collecting,  
Mel



# The Editor's Page

By Edward Schuman

This month, forty years ago three dedicated coin collectors decided to form a numismatic organization solely dedicated to specialty of Judaica and Israel Numismatics. With assistance from the late Yitzak Avni, then Director General of the Israel Government Coins and Medals Corporation the idea became a reality. The three collectors, Morris Bram, Edward Janis and myself, Edward Schuman became the founders of the American Israel Numismatic Association.

Morris Bram was of retirement age and was able to devote the time to the organization and so became president. Ed Janis and myself became officers. Incidentally our membership numbers are Life Member #1, 2 and 3. Morris and his wife Lena presided over the organization for numerous years. They led A.I.N.A. through the golden years, when AINA could afford an office and a paid secretary to do the work.

When Morris moved to Florida, the AINA office also moved. These were the days when demand for Israel Coins was burning due to investor interest. Several dozen local INS clubs were formed by active collectors from Phoenix to Alaska with Morris giving support and encouragement, all with the assistance of Yitzak Avni. Many collectors and investors joined the clubs in order to receive their allotment of new coins regularly. In some instances the dealers who attended the meetings would offer double the price members had paid for the coin just a few minutes before.

AINA planned Coin Conventions in New York, Miami and Los Angeles that attracted hundreds of dealers and thousands of interested collectors. The annual New York AINA convention became one of the premier shows in the east. A lavish cocktail party was held the night before at the hotel. The educational speakers forum was held to packed audiences. The Board met in a room with a large horseshoe table holding the various representatives of the clubs. The affair climaxed with the grand banquet.

The numismatic study tours to Israel became a yearly venture with many participants returning year after year because of the good times they had. One tour had three large busses crammed with tourists and a cut off had to be imposed. "This wasn't there the last time we were here" became a common expression.

But the bubble burst as the speculators fled the scene and Israel coins were no longer the fashion symbol they once were. Hoards of coins were thrown on the market, and prices dropped drastically. Nobody knows



the quantity that were thrown into the melting pot when the price of silver soared, as collectors and investors cut their losses.

To lower expenses, Morris closed down the AINA office and the treasurer operations were moved to Sylvia Haffner's condo. She served as treasurer, secretary and SHEKEL mailer using a bevy of her elderly girl friends for the mailing parties she threw every time an issue was to be mailed. Her husband took them to the post office. The glory days of AINA had passed and membership shrunk from a high of almost 4000 to a fraction of its size almost over night.

With Sylvia's passing, Moe Weinschel, then the president, turned to Florence and asked her to be treasurer. Since I had assumed the position of the editor of the SHEKEL many years before, Moe thought we could work together as a team and do a credible job. This was in 1992 and we have been working together and for all purposes running the organization.

Membership is now on the rise. We have constantly added more members over the years than we now loose to attrition. The organization is solvent, with ample funds in the bank and reserves for the life members in CD's and Israel Government bonds. AINA is financially healthy and should be able to continue indefinitely if operated prudently.

I have told you of my health problems, the kidney disease than has me now connected to a Baxter Dialysis cyler machine for ten hours each day. It is impossible now for either of us to put in the many hours each and every day the organization requires. We have therefore both resigned our positions. Our family and friends have told us how happy they are that our workload for AINA has finally finished.

We are grateful for the many many friends we have made through the organization and met at the various conventions we attended for AINA. We shall remain active as much as possible. We appreciate deeply the countless letters we received from members all over the world, regarding my health problems and good wishes for our future.

In this, the final issue under my editorship, there is enclosed a brochure from the IGCMC. It is not always possible to coordinate the IGCMC mailings with the Shekel. The cut off date has been extended for any purchases made by AINA members until the end of November. I urge you to support Israel and the IGCMC by purchasing an Israeli coin or medal for your collection or as a gift for a friend or relative. You are doing a mitzvah by doing so and the Almighty will surely reward you.

Shalom,

## **Jacob Valero**

### **The First Private Banker in Palestine**

The forefathers of the Valero family in Palestine were Marranos (forced converts) who took the name "Valero" when converting to Christianity. Some of them were expelled from Spain or left for Holland, where they returned to the fold of Judaism, and later moved to Turkey. Some members of the family settled in Palestine, coming from Turkey over 300 years ago.

Ya'akov Valero came from Istanbul around 1835 and worked as a ritual slaughterer. He became heavily involved in the sale of the rear parts of livestock slaughtered by Jews to the Muslims. In order to make the hindquarters kosher, it was necessary to remove the sinews, a time-consuming process. Instead of going to this trouble, the meat was sold to Muslims, with the approval of their religious leaders. He soon acquired enough wealth to start Jacob Valero & Co., the first private bank in Palestine.

The Valeros were known for the bank they owned and operated from 1848 until 1915. The bank was located inside the Old City. The earliest sources that identify the location of the bank are from the 1870s. The 1876 *Guide de la Terre-Sainte* noted that the bank was located at "Sauekat Alloun" (today's David Street).

At that time in the Sauekat Alloun there were shops filled with choice fruits and sweets. Further down on the same street the polyglot money-changers (sarrafs) were stationed, sitting with their small tables and with boxes covered with wire-netting and filled with coins. There was no constant rate of exchange and the sarrafs dealt in all currencies, whether the Ottoman majidi or the English sovereign, and they would accept a Russian imperial, an Austrian ducat, or Maria Teresa gold coin.

This concentration of economic activity in one sector of the market was typical of many traditional Islamic cities of the region. Furthermore, the area in the vicinity of Jaffa Gate was one of the more important commercial nodes of the city in the nineteenth century. From the 1850s onward, it became the focus of tourist activities: hotels, hospices, souvenir shops, post offices, money-changing stands, and other services sprouted inside Jaffa Gate, and the area bustled with pilgrims and tourists.

In the late 1880s the bank consisted of two modest rooms whose windows faced the ancient Hezekiah's Pool. Between two stores which sold vegetables and whose crates filled a large part of the street was a



narrow entranceway which finally led to a number of spacious rooms where Valero engaged in banking. The bank hidden away in an alley of the Old City was typical of late nineteenth century Jerusalem's very small and modest banks. In other parts of the Middle East - Cairo, Alexandria and Beirut - banks were already housed in modern and spacious buildings with impressive exteriors outside the older sections of the city. In the early twentieth century, banks moved outside the Old City walls and were housed in more commanding structures along Jaffa Road. The kavass (guard) that stood before the Anglo-Palestine Bank and greeted the clients left an impression on Jerusalemites. The Valero Bank, however, did not move outside the Old City from its original location. It would appear that towards the end of the nineteenth century, in order to allow for easier identification of its location, a sign for the Valero Bank was put up near the entrance to David Street.

Valero was a conservative banker who carefully evaluated the potential of his clients to repay loans, setting limits on the credit he would extend. Certain customers were considered poor liabilities. The bank avoided extending loans to Arab peasants, despite the high interest rates that could be charged - 20 to 50 percent on average, or even higher. Loans to peasants were seldom repaid on time or often defaulted upon. This avenue of investment was almost exclusively in the hands of Jerusalem's Muslim elite.

In addition to the use of local and foreign currency, some groups and institutions created their own currencies in the form of metal or paper tokens. In Jerusalem there was a shortage of small denominations of coins, greatly needed for day-to-day transactions. Since the exchange from larger to smaller denominations came at a cost, coinage for internal community use was created. These coins were at times accepted and used even outside the community. The German Templar rural colonies and urban neighborhoods produced tokens, as did the Sephardi Chevra Kaddisha (burial society), the Bikur Holim Hospital, and others.

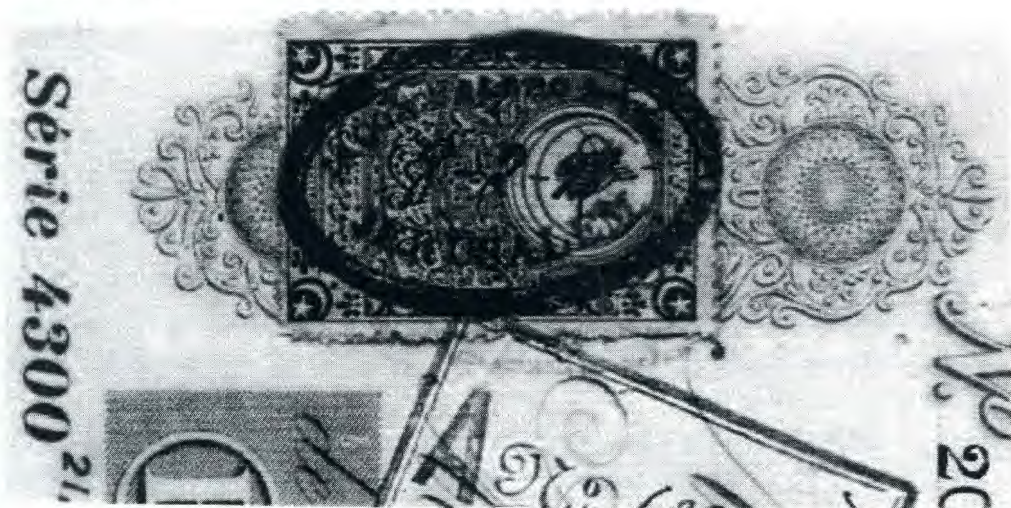
The Valero Bank also issued its own tokens. They came in one piastre and five piastre denomination paper notes. The notes were printed in French with the denomination also in Hebrew and bore a printed emblem with the letters "JV&C" and its equivalent in Arabic. It is not clear how many of these tokens were in circulation. The use of Arabic writing for these notes does lend us to conclude that Muslim merchants would accept this script and that the notes were commonly used by all communities when shopping.

To many Jewish Jerusalemites, Valero was "the Rothschild of Jerusalem, rich in real estate. It is not clear what this perception really



meant. The Valeros purchased key properties, which were central to Jerusalem's commerce - in the Mahane Yehuda market, property along King George Avenue, including the intersection with Jaffa Road, and near Damascus Gate - as well as plots of land in different sections of the city. The term "rich" may be referring to the quantity or value of the properties or both. Or, perhaps because of the central location of the Valero properties, Jerusalem's residents thought that the Valeros were the Rothschilds of the city's real estate market.

The Rothschilds were the most prestigious bankers of the day and Rothschild banking paraphernalia is highly collectible. The illustrated check dated 8<sup>th</sup> February 1898 was written on the Paris account by Jacob Valero & Co. It is payable to La Banque de Salonique for Fr 5000. There is a Turkish revenue stamp affixed to the check which is hand cancelled with the rubber stamp of Jacob Valero & Co. Jerusalem. The reverse bears the bank rubber stamp which shows that it was received in Constantinople on the 15<sup>th</sup> February.





# THE JEWS OF KOSIÇE [KASSA / KOSHITZA / KASCHAU]

by Edgar Guest

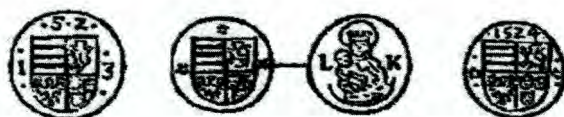
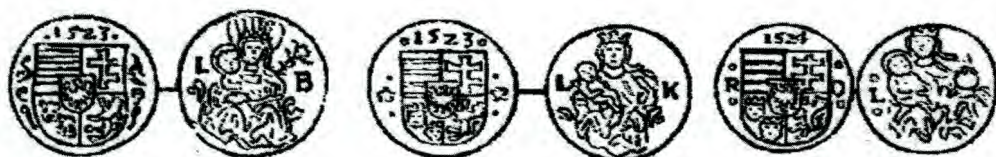
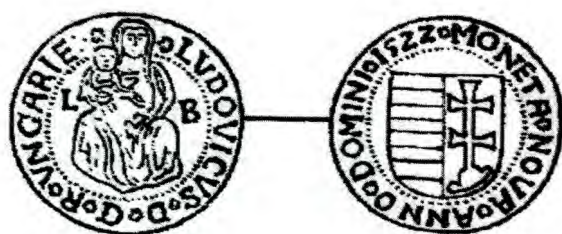
The deportation of the Jewish community of Kosiçe [Kassa] by the Hungarian authorities in May-June 1944 and the subsequent murder of about 12,000 of them in the gas chambers of Auschwitz [The Shekel, September-October 2006] wiped out a tradition and documented presence in that city going back to the early sixteenth century.

By 1524 the Jagello King of Hungary and Bohemia, Lajos [Louis] II [1516-1526] was, for all practical purposes, bankrupt. He decided to re-finance the Royal Treasury by the universally accepted method of recalling and invalidating the old, existing coinage, by minting and issuing new, debased coins, and arbitrarily fixing the exchange rate between the old and new coinage without any reference to their respective silver content.

Due to the very sorry state of the royal finances Jagello Lajos II felt justified in going further than any of his predecessors. His "Moneta Nova" [New Money] groats, denars and obols had only about half the silver content compared with the same denominations previously in circulation. To compensate for the reduced silver content Lajos II issued a royal decree that the old money should be exchanged for the new at the rate of one for one [this turned out to be unacceptable for the country, could not be enforced and the "New Money" had to be abandoned by 1525].

On the 24th March 1525 King Lajos II wrote a letter to the Council and burghers of Kassa, an important provincial commercial centre and the seat of one of the Royal Mints. The letter informed the Council and burghers of Kassa that the King had appointed a new Mintmaster to oversee the minting of his "New Money" coinage at the Kassa mint.

The new Mintmaster thus appointed was Isac Iudeus, Isaac the Jew. Such an appointment went against the ingrained anti-Jewish attitudes prevalent in Europe among all the ruling royal houses and the Church. There were no known unconverted Jews employed in Hungarian royal service for over two hundred years. This explains why, instead of simply telling the burghers of Kassa that he had made the appointment, King Lajos II went to great lengths to justify the employment of a Jew in such an important position. The King "...needed a person with perfect knowledge of the Science and Art of minting...". He chose Isaac the Jew "...recommended by our faithful Treasurer the Reverend Lord Bishop of Veszprém, Paul de Warda..." Therefore the burghers of Kassa should



**"MONETA NOVA"**



“...grant Isaac the Jew suitable hospitality and peaceful accomodation and should defend and protect him against all hindrance...”.

It is known that in 1524 Isaac the Jew issued “New Money” denars [Corpus Nummorum Hungariæ No. 208A; Lajos Huszar 846; Artur Pohl 258-4] in Kassa. These coins are knopwn as “Isaaciden” and carry the mintmark M – C [Moneta Cassoviæ] and small lilies between flowers. In 1525 the minting of “New Money” was discontinued. It is not known what happened to Isaac the Jew, Royal Mintmaster of Kassa.

Transcript of a letter by the Jagello King Lajos (Louis) II [1516-1526] to the town of Kassa (Kosice) dated at Buda on the 24th March 1524 announcing the appointment of Isaac the Jew as the head of the Mint of Kassa

*Lodovicus, dei gracia Rex Hungarie et Bohemie etc. Prudentes et circumspecti fideles nobis dilecti. Cum jam cusionem novarum monetarum in ista civitate Cassoviensi inchoare fecimus, necessarium est quempiam, qui artem cusionis perfecte sciat, istic preficere; que, ut commodius posset continuari, providum Isac Judeum, quem sufficienti prudencia et hujus rei Sciencia ac Magisterio optime predictum esse intelleximus, ad hoc officium a Spectabili ac Magnifico domino Joanne, Wayvoda nostro Transsylvaniensi etc. accepimus, eumque fidelis noster Reverendus dominus Paulus de Warda, Episcopus Ecclesie Wesprimiensis, Thesaurarius noster, una cum servitore suo, in eadem camera constituto, in ista cusione prefecit, quem sua industria nobis usui, vobisque in nihilo nocumento fore confidimus. Propterea volumus, et Fidelitatibus vestris firmiter precipiendo mandamus, quatenus habita presencium noticia, ipsi Isac Judeo de hospicio competenti et pacifico habitaculo providere, et eum ab omni impedimento defendere et protegere debeatis. Secus nulla ratione facturi, Datum Bude in die Cene Domini, Anno ejusdem Millesimo quingentesimo vigesimo quarto.*

In 1884 the original letter was in the Archives of Kassa (No.1059) and a copy among the Kaprina Archives at the University of Budapest (Volume XVII B/4/209/CXXX).

# IBRAHIM IBN YA'QUB, SPANISH TRAVELER, AND THE JEWS OF PRAGUE, AD 966

By Marvin Tameanko

Spanish Jews in the late tenth century AD were experienced travelers, usually employed by their Islamic Umayyad rulers as commercial agents, ambassadors or observers somewhat like diplomatic spies. The reputation of Spanish Jews for scholarship and fluency in languages was so firmly established that even 500 years later, in 1492, Christopher Columbus took on his first voyage to America a Marrano, a converted Spanish Jew named Luis de Torres, as a diplomat and translator who also spoke Arabic, Latin, Chaldean and Hebrew, to negotiate with the Chinese he hoped to encounter at his destination. One famous, Spanish Jewish traveling scholar was Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub from Tortosa in Catalonia. He was employed by the Umayyad Caliph of Spain and in the years 960 to 970 he voyaged through France to Germany then on to Czechoslovakia and Poland, back to Italy, then returned to Spain by ship via Sicily. Ibn Ya'qub wrote down his observations about peoples he encountered, and the commerce, landscape, food, plants, and medical conditions of the countries he visited. This travelogue was preserved in Cordoba by a group of Jewish scholars working for the government of the Caliph. This fact is a clear indication that Ya'qub was employed on an official voyage from the Caliph and was, therefore, required to submit a written report about his travels.

Ibn Ya'qub was commissioned by Caliph al-Hakam II, the Umayyad ruler in Spain, 961-976, and it is uncertain whether he was sent on his mission to Europe as a slave trader, a diplomat or a scientific observer. However, his writings show such a diverse interest in numerous things that historians tend to believe he was sent as a spy to the foreign courts to learn everything he could about the countries of Europe beyond France. But this would not exclude him from doing some quasi-official business and acquiring merchandise or even slaves, especially blond, blue eyed Slavic young women, the most desirable additions to the harem of the Caliphs in Spain.

Before leaving Spain Ibrahim probably filled his money bags with the splendid gold dinars issued by his patron al-Hakam II. These fine coins would be acceptable all over Europe and were more desirable in exchange for goods and services than the crude silver coinage used in France, Italy and Germany. Even if not negotiable as legal tender they would have been very desirable as gold bullion pieces traded by weight. These coins of al-Hakam carried mint marks stating 'al-Andalus' for Cordoba or 'Madinat al-



Zahra', which was the mint in the royal residential palace. Naturally, like all Umayyad coinage, these coins were engraved with inscriptions in Kufic and never the images of any living things. The central inscription was always the Kalima, the proclamation of the "Oneness of God and that Mohammed was his only Prophet."



**A rare gold dinar of al-Hakam II, 961-976, struck in Madinat al-Zahra, Spain. The coinage of the Umayyads of Spain by G. C. Miles, 252. Coin photo courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, CNG.**

From his written account it appears that Ibrahim was sent to Europe as part of a large diplomatic corps visiting the German Emperor Otto I, 936-973, at his court in Merseburg. Al-Hakam II was known to be a Caliph greatly interested in science and he may have sent Ibrahim to observe and report on all the new scientific inventions made by Christian scholars. Otto I had been crowned by the Pope as the Emperor in 962 and, holding this high regal position, his court would have been the center of culture and learning for most of Europe. Also, Otto I was a member of the Saxon line that followed the Carolingian dynasty, ruling over the kingdom established by Charlemagne. As the Holy Roman Emperor he controlled a large part of central Europe. To consolidate his holdings' Otto I fought several wars and he must have made some great contributions to his nation because historians conferred on him the title 'the Great'.

In documents it is recorded that Otto I gave permission to the foreigner, Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub, to travel throughout his lands. Before embarking on this voyage Ibrahim probably exchanged some Islamic gold coinage for the silver coins issued by his protector Otto I, to use as spending money. These coins were struck in several cities of the empire and the mint city name is usually given prominently on the reverse of the coin. The example illustrated was struck in Cologne (Koln) Germany and is shown on the reverse of the coin in its Latin form as COLONIA. Cologne was originally founded as a Roman colony in 38 BC, named Colonia Agrippiensis, and the first part of this title was retained as the city's name in medieval times. The obverse of the coin displays the cross with four pellets in the quadrants, and the inscription + ODDO IMP AVG, the abbreviations for OTTO IMPERATOR AUGUSTUS. The small cross preceding the legend was used to indicate where the inscription began.





**A Pfennig of Otto I, the Great, 936-973, struck in the city of Cologne. Die Munzen von Kolonvon beginn der Pragung bis 1304 by W. Havernick. Photo courtesy of CNG.**

Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub traveled all the way to the Vistula and Cracow in Poland, visiting many cities of the western Slavs on his way. Later Polish historians highly regarded Ya'qub's writings because he mentioned Prince Mieszko and his Piast territories, a relatively unknown medieval ruler. However, most historians were interested in Ya'qub's visit to the city of Prague in around 966. Ibrahim, writing in Arabic, called this city 'Fulda' in a recently discovered version of his manuscript. He commented on the new stone walls around the city's castle and remarked that Prague was a community "... made richer by commerce than all others." He noted the numerous Slavic merchants, mostly Muslims and Jews from Russia, Poland and from Hungary, who brought goods such as slaves, metals, honey, amber, furs and hides to the markets. He mentioned that leather goods offered in Prague, such as saddles, harnesses, and shields, were of the highest quality. Also, Ibrahim was amazed by the fact that people coming to purchase items used mostly light pieces of cloth instead of coins as currency. He said that although these pieces of cloth "lacked value in themselves, they were hoarded like money and used to buy all kinds of things." It is possible that Ibrahim is here describing an early form of local paper money or bank notes that were used as a token, small change currency in the marketplaces of Prague.

Ya'qub arrived in Prague during the reign of Boleslav I, 929-967, who accepted German suzerainty in 950, and whose kingdom stretched all the way to Cracow in Poland. It is possible that Ibrahim revisited the city during the rule of Boleslav II, 967-999. Ibrahim remarked that the Jews living in Prague were merchants who prospered through trade. Both the father and son, Boleslav kings in Prague, were protective of the Jews in their kingdom and Boleslav II perhaps even appointed a Jew named Omer as his moneyer or mint master. It is believed that Omer was a wealthy merchant in Prague who was commissioned to strike coins for the king. These coins, silver denars, were patterned after the so-called 'Hand of God' penny introduced in England by King Ethelred the Redeless. The coin



displays a hand descending from Heaven on the obverse with the inscription + BOLEZL LS + DLXS. Some of the letters in the legend are badly formed or inverted. The reverse showed a crude, draped bust surrounded by the legend + VIC ACARR ZIREMO, again with some of the letters retrograde and blundered as is typical for medieval coins. ZIMERO is the retrograde letters of OMERIS, meaning 'of OMER.'



**A silver denar of Boleslav II, 967-999, struck in Prague by his perhaps Jewish moneyer named Omer. The hand of God descending from heaven on the reverse is a motif adopted from contemporary English coins. Beschreibung der Sammlung Bohmischer Munzen und Medaillen des Max Donebauer by E. Fiala, 99.  
Photo courtesy of CNG.**

We can imagine the scene when Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub returned to Cordoba, Spain in around 970. In this picture we would see an aged and weary traveler delivering the bickering Slavic female slaves to the palace harem and then proceeding with his samples of merchandise and the written report of his travels to the chambers of the Caliph's oversight and reviewing committee. After being 'debriefed' by his superiors Ya'qub would have emptied his purse on the table, spilling out all the gold dinars, the silver denars and pfennings, and a few samples of the cloth money used in the markets of Prague. He would have presented his final, written account of the trip's expenses, and then gone home to his wife and children in Tortosa, arriving just in time to enjoy the coming of the Sabbath and the peaceful day of rest he so richly deserved.

# BENJAMIN OF TUDELA, AND THE JEWS OF BAGHDAD

By Marvin Tameanko

More than a century before Marco Polo began on his journey to the Far East, a Spanish Jew, named Benjamin ben Jonah, from the city of Tudela in Navarre, set out on an eight-year journey, from 1165 to 1173, that took him 2,000 miles through Europe, Asia and Africa and into 300 cities including Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Damascus, Mosul, Baghdad, Alexandria, and Cairo. Benjamin started his journey in Spain, traveled through France and Italy to Greece and Turkey, to Palestine, then to Iraq and Iran, probably around the Arabian peninsula by sea to Egypt, on to North Africa, and back to Spain. He wrote a travel book, 'SeferhaMassa'ot', 'The Book of Travels' that recorded his experiences and impressions of things he saw. Historians insist that nobody knows why Benjamin embarked on his travels but some romantic scholars say Benjamin was searching for safe havens for the Jews of Spain and Europe who were beginning to be severely persecuted by their Christian rulers. In each country he visited Benjamin met with the local Jewish communities and reported on their status, influence, wealth and privileges. It seems possible, at least to this writer, that Benjamin was investigating the restoration of the defunct commercial network and international trade association that Spanish-Jewish merchants, called the Radinites, had established among the Jewish communities in Europe and Asia during the 9th to the 11th century AD. The name Radinites was supposedly derived from the Persian phrase "rah dan," meaning "knows the way." The Radinites were an elite group of learned businessmen who set up a trade system based on the exchange of merchandise for letters of credit and bills of sale, written in Hebrew, and which circulated throughout the widespread Jewish diaspora. This arrangement permitted merchants to travel without carrying large amounts of money or trade commodities and to exchange pieces of paper for merchandise that would be carried in caravans to a variety of cities where the members of the local Jewish community would accept the letters of credit and forward or transship the goods, paying coinage to the various participants out of the money earlier placed on deposit by traveling merchants. This was, in fact, the beginnings of international trade and banking practices. The Radinite system avoided the dire threats to traveling merchants by bandits and pirates who constantly preyed on these traders.

Benjamin was born in the city of Tudela in Navarre, Spain, originally a Moorish city subordinate to the Caliphs of Cordoba and the largest Jewish community in northern Spain. It was conquered by the Christians under Alphonso the Battler of Aragon in 1119 and for a few years the



Muslims, Jews and Christians who resided in Tudela coexisted peacefully. However the Muslims were soon banished by Christian authorities to villages outside the city and the Jews were restricted to a small part of the city. Tudela was a city of trade and commerce but also a center of culture and learning. In those years the Jewish quarter of the city produced the poet Abraham ben Ezra, the philosopher Yehuda Halevi, as well as the geographer and traveler, Benjamin ben Jonah. Benjamin was considered by many authors to have also been a rabbi and therefore a scholar who spoke several languages, knew Hebrew, Islamic and Christian laws, and could easily gain introductions to the leaders of the communities he visited. The Islamic world at that time would have treated a Spanish rabbi with respect and permitted him to travel freely.



**A 19th century, imaginative impression of what Benjamin ben Jonah of Tudela may have looked like.**

In his book, although he visited many cities, Benjamin heaped his highest praise on the city of Baghdad and was most enthusiastic about the ruler and the Jewish community of this capital city of the Abbasids. The Abbasid kingdom stretched from Spain through North Africa and the Middle East all the way to India. The entire domain was ruled over at that time by the Caliph Al Mustanjid Billah, also known in literature as El Mostanshed, 1160-1170, who resided in Baghdad. Benjamin fully described this city and left historians many insights into the court protocol, politics, architecture and agriculture of the Islamic world.

Benjamin began his journey from Spain in Saragossa, another Islamic city conquered by Alphonso the Battler and, as he was traveling into Muslim dominated territories, he probably took with him as 'travelers' checks' and pocket money the fine gold dinars struck by the last Almoravid (Murabitid) Caliph of Saragossa, Ali bin Yusuf, 1106-1143, whose coinage



was the most pleasing and extensive of all the Almoravid series and probably still circulated in Spain. These coins would have been recognized as valid all over Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and also acceptable as legal tender in most parts of Europe which had trade relations with Islamic nations.



**A gold dinar of Ali bin Yusuf, 1106-1143, a fine example of Islamic coinage. The Numismatic History of Late Medieval North Africa by H. W. Hazard, 267. Coin photo courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group CNG.**

When Benjamin arrived in Baghdad, he immediately contacted the Jewish community, which numbered about 40,000. He described their life as secure, prosperous and honorable under the benign rule of the Caliph Ai Mudtanjid. Benjamin also said that there were 28 synagogues located in the city or in the suburban areas across the Tigris river. The main synagogue was attended by the leader of the community, called the 'Head of the Captivity', the 'Rosh Galut' or the Exilarch, and by the so-called 'Princes of the House of David', probably descendants of the noble Jewish families or aristocratic elders taken to Babylon after the destruction of Israel and who had remained in Persia after Cyrus the Great permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem in 538 BC. Benjamin recorded the opulent structure of the main synagogue with varicolored marble columns overlaid with silver and gold. He mentions the fact that Baghdad was a center for trade and commerce from the East and that many of the Jews were involved in this business. The largest denomination of coins struck for Ai Mustanjid Billah were very fine gold dinars that carried the typical Islamic designs made up of only inscriptions in Kufic. The Muslims strictly adhered to the Second Commandment and did not permit any images to be depicted on their coinage but the central inscription on the coin was the 'Kalima', the proclamation of the oneness of God and that Mohammed was his only prophet. Many of these coins were struck in the mint of Baghdad, called by the Muslims Madinat al-Salam, literally the 'City of Peace', an ironic title considering the terrible events taking place there recently.





**A gold dinar struck for caliph Al Mustanjid Billah, AD 1160-1170, at the mint in Madinat al-Salam (Baghdad). *Catalogue des Monnaies Musulmanes de la Bibliotheque Nationale* by Henri Lavoix, 1271.  
Coin photo courtesy of CNG.**

Benjamin said that the Caliph of Baghdad was "kind to Israel" and had many attendants and advisors who were Jewish. The Caliph also spoke and wrote in Hebrew and studied the laws of Israel. Benjamin adds that Al Mustanjid was "truthful and trusty, speaking peace to all men. ..The Caliph is a righteous man and all his actions are for good." If only such a great man ruled over Iraq and Iran today.

# JECHIAL, THE MEDIEVAL MINT MASTER OF WUERZBURG

By Marvin Tameanko

The civilizations of the many diverse countries in which Jews lived always played a part in the story of Judaism but the events of medieval, Christian Europe had the most profound effect on Jewish history. Judaeans first came to Italy during the 2nd century BC then entered Western Europe in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC by way of Gaul (France) when they accompanied the conquering Roman legions as mercenary soldiers, craftsmen and merchants. These Romanized Jews later spread out into the stronghold cities all along the northern and eastern frontiers. Roman documents mention a substantial and influential Jewish community in Colonia Agrippinensis, present-day Cologne, in Germany, by the early 3rd century AD. Later, the Jews lived and worked peacefully with the pagan Gauls, Goths and Franks, who replaced the Romans as rulers in Europe, but when these pagan tribes converted and Christianity became the official state religion in the 6th century, persecutions began. Charlemagne, 764-814, the Holy Roman emperor of France and Germany, protected the Jews in his empire because he found them useful as scholars, diplomats, advisors and merchants, but the fanatical church officials gradually prevailed and Charlemagne's sons and grandsons enforced laws that limited the activities of the Jews or forced them to convert. So, many of the Jews packed up their little bags and moved to more favorable locations in the northern and eastern German hinterlands.

The introduction of the European feudal system in the 11th century AD created more obstacles for the Jews because they did not fit into this rigid society of three established classes, nobles, clergymen and serfs. So the Jews became burghers, merchants conducting business in cities, who were independent of the three feudal classes. Unable to own land or practice a trade, they were sometimes given the unique status of being properties of the crown where the rulers dealt with them as he pleased. When the Jews were prevented by laws from competing with Christians in commerce, many of them turned to money lending. In this business, the Jews once again became useful to the kings, dukes and bishops, who profited through the forced loans they extracted and the taxes and fees they charged on Jewish usury. Soon, the murderous, plundering mobs, enlisted in the First Crusade of 1096, pushed the Jews out of the western urban centers and into Poland where the kings and nobles again found them to be useful in commerce and to establish a middle class. However, great men



emerged out of this terrible milieu. Rabbi Shlomo ben Issac, better known by his acronym, Rashi, was born in 1040 in France and became the prototype for the combined sage, scholar, and teacher that made such medieval rabbis famous. These men eased the mental burdens placed on the Jews and provided the spiritual guidance that permitted them to survive. Remarkably, one rare, medieval coin, struck in Wuerzburg (Wurzburg), in south-central Germany, encapsulates this entire, dramatic story.

This coin is a silver pfenning, sometimes called a denar, after the Roman 'denarius', struck for Bishop Otto von Lobdenburg, head of the ecclesiastical court in Wuerzburg in 1207-1223. Amazingly, the name of the Jewish mint master of the city, 'Jechial', in Hebrew letters, appears prominently on the coin. The obverse shows a facing bust of the ruler, and the reverse exhibits architectural elements usually identified in coin catalogs as a castle, a church, or the mighty, main gate of the city. Personally, the author of this article thinks the scene on the reverse is a panoramic view of the entire city of Wuerzburg, illustrating the walls, main churches and civic buildings of the city's center. This coin reverse closely resembles the city-view of Magdeburg on a coin that was very popular in the area and was struck for 40 years during 1152-1192. The Magdeburg coin is a 'bracteate', a large, thin silver piece struck on one side only. If Wuerzburg had a strong trade relationship with Magdeburg at that time, it made good business sense for the moneyer, Jechial, to copy Magdeburg's designs.



**A rare silver denar (pfenning) of Wuerzburg, struck in 1207-1223 by the Jewish moneyer, Jechial, for bishop Otto von Lobdenburg. The name Jechial, in Hebrew letters, appears below the view of the city on the reverse. Classical Numismatic Group (CNG), Mail Bid sale, 69, June 8, 2005, lot 1972, and William M. Rosenblum, Mailbid Sale #35D, Nov. 10, 2005, lot 458.**





**A silver bracteate, (a one-sided coin) struck for the city of Magdeburg in 1152-1192 showing a view of the city. This may have been the model for Jechial's of Wuerzburg. Die Mittelalterlichen Brakteaten im Kester-Museum, Hannover, by F. Berger no. 1610.**

It appears that some of the Jews escaping the massacres and persecutions of the First Crusade arrived in Wuerzburg sometime at the end of the 11th century AD. At first only a dozen families took up residence but soon they were joined by relatives and business associates from nearby cities. By the end of the 12th century, Wuerzburg's Jewish community had prospered and, encouraged by generous donations from the merchants, the city became a center of Jewish learning. This ushered in a golden period for the Jews of Wuerzburg with prominent rabbis coming from nearby cities to teach in its schools. The first Jews in Wuerzburg had conducted business as sellers of second hand-goods and peddlers of low value commodities but as they grew in numbers, they took up the crafts of working in wood and metals. In fact, Jewish goldsmiths and jewelers earned a high reputation for skillful work in medieval Germany. The man we know as Jechial of Wuerzburg came to prominence as Bishop Otto's moneyer or mint master during this relatively peaceful era. We can only guess at his background and qualifications for this high position but there are two possibilities. First, he may have been a talented goldsmith capable of engraving dies and striking coins for the city. Or second, he was a banker and money lender, acting as a treasurer or advisor to the Church, and a financier who appreciated the profits that could be made by striking silver bullion into a local, trade coinage. In either capacity, Jechial may have worked directly under the Bishop as an employee or he may have been an independent contractor licensed to operate the mint. In any case the numerous coins he struck proved that he performed his duties efficiently for many years. Also, Jechial must have been an exceptional and influential individual in the community because the Bishop permitted him to place his name, in Hebrew letters, in a prominent location on the reverse of the coin.



Jewish minters were not unusual in medieval Europe and we know that many operated in Spain, under both Moslem and Christian rulers, in France, Germany, England, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. However, Jechial of Wuerzburg was one of the few minters who proudly blazoned his full name, in Hebrew, on the coinage he fabricated. Another remarkable coin, a bracteate struck in Frankfurt am Main in 1170-1180, also carried the name of the Jewish moneyer of that city. This was David Hacohen, a man whose full name was inscribed in Hebrew letters on the coins' reverses. These coins were struck for Kuno von Minzenburg, a ruler mentioned in history as a protector of the Jews during the Crusades. Hacohen (literally, The Priest), must have been a prominent member of the well-known community of Jews in Frankfurt and he may have established the rare precedent of Jewish minters placing their full name on the coins they struck.



**A silver bracteate issued under Kuno von Minzenburg, 1170-1180, in Frankfurt am Main by the Jewish mint master, David Hacohen. His Hebrew name is inscribed in full on the left side of the coin. Jewish Minters and Medalists by Daniel M. Friedenberg, page 12.**

The city of Wuerzburg was only a minor trade center in medieval times but it played a relevant part in Jewish history because it suffered all the major disasters that medieval Jews experienced during the 11th to 14th century. The Jews of that city managed to weather the storms of persecutions and even to flourish into the 13th century, as suggested by the high status and position of Jechial. At that time, Frederick II, 1215 to 1250, ruled over the German empire, and he was not only a brilliant leader but also one of the most learned men of his days. He extended certain rights to the Jews in his empire even allowing them to settle disputes in their own courts. However, in those same years, the terrible canard of 'The Blood Libel' became popular in Germany and mobs attacked and killed the Jews in Erfurt and Frankfurt, both neighboring cities of Wuerzburg. Even the emperor and the Pope denouncing this preposterous accusation could not prevent the riots and pogroms that eventually spread to Wuerzburg. In

1298 an even more terrible accusation, the 'bleeding of the host', in which Jews supposedly stole the piece of bread representing the 'host' in church rituals, and stabbed or beat it until it bled. Led by evil noblemen who were heavily indebted to Jewish bankers, mobs of Christians swept through Germany devastating the Jewish communities, including Wuerzburg. Most of the surviving Jews left for a more hospitable Poland but others returned Wuerzburg to rebuild the community. In 1349 a new terror for the Jews of Germany appeared when the 'Black Death' swept through Europe. The rabble blamed the Jews for causing the plague and of poisoning the wells, and many Jewish communities, as well as Wuerzburg, were liquidated. Only in the 19th century, 500 years, later, did the Jews return to Wuerzburg and by 1933 the community numbered 2,145 people.

During World War II the Nazis murdered or dispersed these Jews and the city of Wuerzburg itself was destroyed by the air-raids of the Allies. After the war the city was physically restored and some of the German Jews returned to help in the rebuilding. Today, in 2006, there is a small but vital community of Jews still living in Wuerzburg but only the rare coins with the name of the Jewish mint master, Jechial, remain as a record of the medieval Jews who once lived there..

## ENDNOTES

- 1 See *Jewish Minters and Medalists* by Daniel M. Friedenberg, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia.,Pa. 1976, pages 6-24
- 2 Israel: *A History of the Jewish People* by Rufus Lears. The World Publishing Co., Cleveland, Ohio 1949 page 285



# Historic Views of the Holy Land in the 1880s By J. Leslie Porter

J. Leslie Porter was one of the most popular writers of the Holy Land in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His work on Jerusalem, Bethany and Bethlehem and the surrounding area is a fascinating account of the biblical sites that he knew so well from his years of living in Palestine. His work is a storehouse of nearly everything that illustrates the topography of Palestine, and the manner and customs of its people. The book is lavishly illustrated with original drawings.

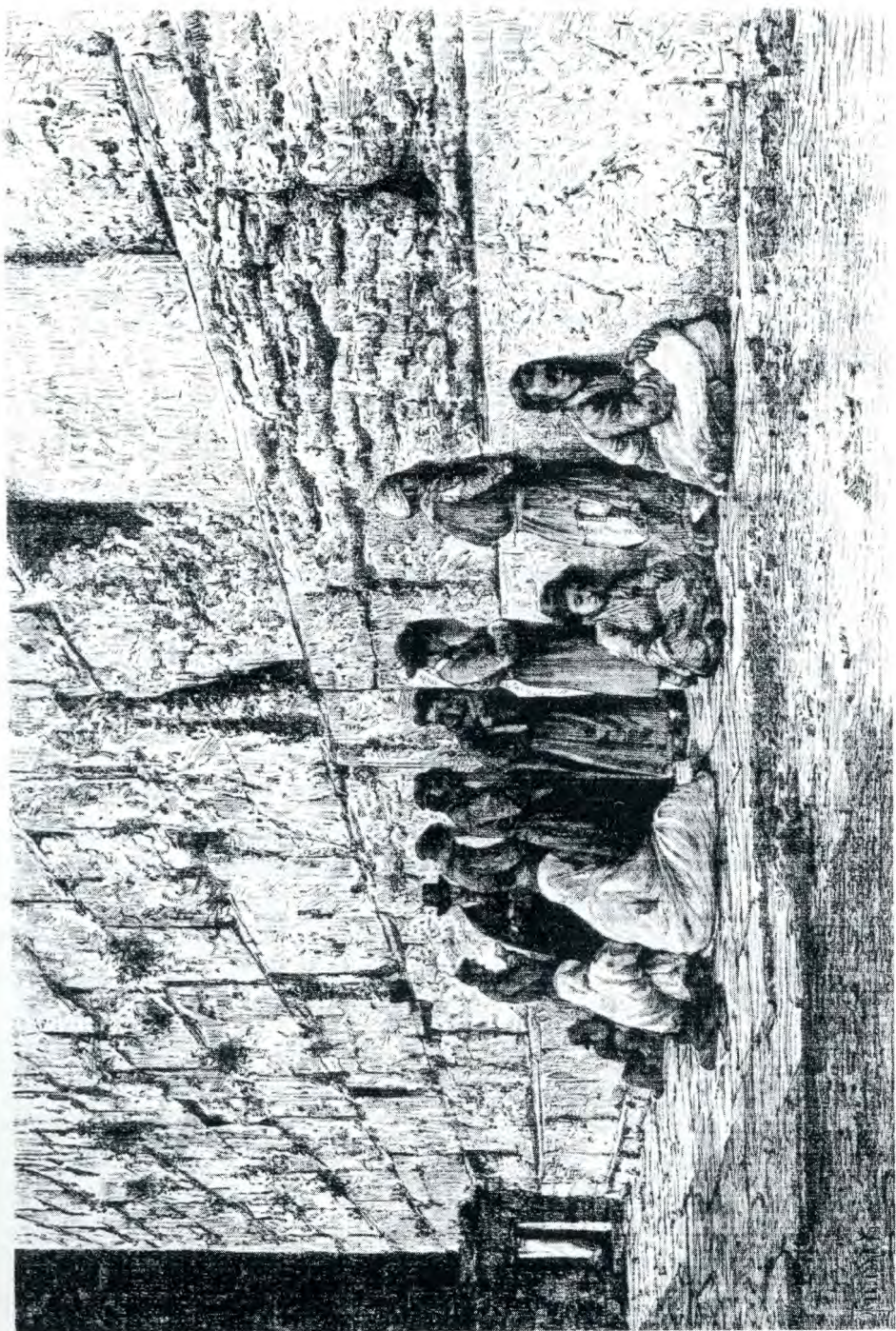
It is the idea of your editor to include in each issue a description of a historical site from the original book in the SHEKEL that illustrates the topography of Palestine,

*The Place of Wailing.*—Entering the inhabited part of the old city, and winding through some crooked filthy lanes, I suddenly found myself, on turning a sharp corner, in a spot of singular interest—the “Jews’ Place of Wailing.” It is a small paved quadrangle; on one side are the backs of low modern houses, without door or window; on the other is the lofty wall of the Haram, of recent date above, but having below five courses of beveled stones in a good state of preservation.

Here the Jews are permitted to approach the sacred enclosure, and wail over the fallen Temple, whose very dust is dear to them, and in those stones they still take pleasure. It was Friday, and a crowd of poor devotees had assembled—men and women of all ages and all nations, dressed in the quaint costumes of every country of Europe and Asia. Old men were there,—pale, haggard, careworn men, tottering on pilgrim staves; and little girls with white faces, and lustrous black eyes, gazing wistfully now at their parents, now at the old wall. Some were on their knees, chanting mournfully from a book of Hebrew prayers, swaying their bodies to and fro; some were prostrate on the ground, pressing forehead and lips to the earth; some were close to the wall, burying their faces in the rents and crannies of the old stones; some were kissing them, some had their arms spread out as if they would clasp them to their bosoms, some were bathing them with tears, and all the while sobbing as if their hearts would burst.

It was a sad and touching spectacle. Eighteen centuries of exile and woe have not dulled their hearts’ affections, or deadened their feelings of





JEW'S WAILING-PLACE.



national devotion. Here we see them assembled from the ends of the earth, poor, despised, downtrodden outcasts, amid the desolations of their fatherland, beside the dishonored ruins of their ancient sanctuary, chanting, now in accents of deep pathos, and now of wild woe, the prophetic words of their own Psalmist,

—“O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled...We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever?”

“Oh, weep for those that wept by Babel’s stream,  
Whose shrines are desolate, whose land a dream;  
Weep for the harp of Judah’s broken spell;  
Mourn—where their God hath dwelt, the godless dwell!”  
On certain occasions, towards evening, the following litany is chanted. The accompanying engraving represents two Jews chanting.

Leader: *For the palace that lies desolate*:—Response: *We sit in solitude and mourn.*

L. *For the palace that is destroyed*:—R. *We sit, etc.*

L. *For the walls that are overthrown*:—R. *We sit, etc.*

L. *For our majesty that is departed*:—R. *We sit, etc.*

L. *For our great men who lie dead*:—R. *We sit, etc.*

L. *For the precious stones that are burned*:—R. *We sit, etc.*

L. *For the priests who have stumbled*:—R. *We sit, etc.*

L. *For our kings who have despised Him*:—R. *We sit, etc.*

Another antiphon is as follows:—

Leader: *We pray Thee, have mercy on Zion*!—Response: *Gather the children of Jerusalem.*



## The Victory Coin



The Western Wall of the Temple of Solomon  
and the date of its restoration to Jewish worship

# Size and Color in Banknotes

By: Shmuel Aviezer

There was a time in the first years of the twentieth century that banknotes of high denominations were of such a large size that they were nicknamed "sheets"! Examples: Russia 500 rubles: 275x126mm; Italy 10,000 liras: 246x125mm (compared with the current size of the highest denominations: 157x69mm and 163x75mm respectively).

The main reasons for a large-size banknotes were:

1) To show an impressive look of the portrait, be it for royalty or ruler, that bestow respect and prestige.

2) To accommodate for multi-color embellishments of background patterns in addition to a monument, building or relics, calligraphic letterings, raised digits and signature.

3) To embrace security elements, such as watermark, in located places. Another twin factor in producing banknotes is the color. It serves as a very decisive component to differentiate one denomination from the other, beside the size, as many researchers prove that color attracts the eye of the user more than any other element. Gradually along the years, the size of the banknotes all over the world has been reduced. This trend is dictated by many motives:

a) An increasing need for banknotes due to economic expansion, inflation and the emergence of new countries. To ensure savings of costs, more banknotes had to be produced from one standard sheet, from 15 -20 to about 40.

b) Development of security devices that could be assimilated into a small size banknote.

c) Sophisticated printing techniques that enable production of banknotes fitting the requirements of automatic sorting and counting machines.

d) Size of banknotes no more regarded as indicative of the prestige of the issuing country.

The predominant mode of making identifiable banknotes has for a long time been a smaller size for a low denomination, increasing in size to fit a higher denomination, all exposing distinct color between each denomination.

Some of the countries that still follow this system: Britain, India, Mexico, Russia, Singapore, Switzerland, South Africa; and several Arab countries such as: Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Saudi Arabia. The average size of the banknotes in these countries falls between 130 x 60mm and 160x70mm.



A notable supporting undertaking for this system is the issue in the year 2000 of the Euro banknotes in varying sizes and colors. Presumably, this choice came to cater for the different tastes of the people in the founding countries of the European Union.

Another mode of producing banknotes, which has been simultaneously gathering momentum, for many years now, adapts a uniform size for all denominations identified only by differentiating color for each denomination.

This tendency is widespread in countries of Central and South America: Chili, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Cayman Islands, Surinam and others. The average size of banknotes in these countries range between 150x70mm and 160x75mm.

Now, forget what is said above. There is one country that defies all the related theories: The United States of America. As known, all the denominations of the U.S. dollar are of one size and uniform color (black in front and green in the back). The philosophy behind this concept is that the public should read the figures of the denomination at the first glance, being the most important factor in a banknote, and only then look at the other elements, such as portrait, the buildings and other components (How many people know whose portrait is depicted on the U.S.\$50?). Even after the auxiliary additions of late (some color shades, security thread, shifting color and watermark), though very significant impregnating ingredients to the banknotes, the dominant colors and the uniform size (156x65mm) remain as before.

Strangely, there is only one other small country that imitates the U.S. lead in having banknotes of uniform size (140x70mm) and color (black and green), in addition to a holographic band at the left side: Eritrea!

In Israel, since the first banknote issue of the Anglo-Palestine series in 1948, the prevailing system of issuing banknotes has been the differentiation in size and distinct colors. This mode was changed with the issue of the I.S.500 Rothschild note in 1.12.1982. Due to the soaring inflation at the time, the issue of higher denominations was imperative and therefore it was necessary to clamp on the requirement for larger sizes of banknotes by adopting a uniform size of 138x76mm with diversified colors. This size was also applied to the first series of the New Sheqel, launched in September 4, 1985. The issue of the second New Sheqel banknotes during the year 2000, the one-size different-colour system was maintained, with a slight reduction in the width of the banknotes (71mm instead of 76mm).

It is worthwhile to specify here the outstanding characteristic of the current series of banknotes in Israel: They are designed vertically, whereas the design of all Israeli banknotes in the past has been horizontal, as is the



case with most banknotes worldwide. As yet the only other country, known to have vertically-designed banknotes, is Switzerland.

(For more details on the size of banknotes see my article in the "Shekel" of November-December 1992).



#### Front

Portrait of Moshe Sharett; picture of the ceremony of the unfurling of the Israeli flag at the UN building on May 12, 1949; text from the speech given by Sharett on that occasion.

A triangle in the right-hand corner. Two vertical lines in intaglio ink at the top left of the note.

In the top right-hand corner in numbers, in Hebrew and with the words "Bank of Israel"; and in the bottom left-hand corner in metallic gold.

Portrait of Sharett and a small circle beneath it enclosing the initial of his surname (in Hebrew).

Threaded through the paper below the middle of the note.



#### Back

Picture of Jewish Brigade volunteers during WW II and of a pre-State look-out tower; text from Sharett's radio address after his return from a visit to the Jewish Brigade in Italy.

To the right of the main text with titles of seven books written by Moshe Sharett. In numbers with the words "New Sheqalim" and "Bank of Israel"; in iridescent ink and in Arabic characters. A triangle composed of small squares, with the apex pointing to the right.

A small triangle printed on either side of the note; the two triangles form a precise Star of David.

Once in olive-green and once in black which reflects UV light.



## AINA AT THE ANA IN DENVER, COLORADO

By Donna J. Sims, NLG

The ANA Convention was in full swing upon my arrival in Denver on Wednesday, August 16. I have not been in downtown Denver for a number of years and it certainly has changed since then. Once checked in at the Holiday Inn, it was off to the Convention Center, just a couple blocks away, and the beginning of many AINA activities. Some were fun but for the most part, it would be work for me.

It was not long before it was time to head for the meeting of the AINA Board of Directors. Many things were accomplished at this meeting for the organization itself and for the membership in general. Among many things that were discussed and decided upon, some were: 1) two new Directors were voted in to sit on the Board for a term of 3 years, Simcha Kuritzky from Maryland and Roger Merritt from Florida; 2) elections will be held early next year for 3 incumbent board members along with any nominations received from the general membership; 3) the Index to The Shekel will be updated; 4) the AINA website will be updated; and, 5) the current officer vacancies were filled (until next year after elections and the new Board selects new officers) – J.J. Van Grover was named as Interim Vice-President and yours truly was named as Interim Secretary.

Working at the AINA Table was actually a lot of fun. Greeting old friends and meeting new ones is and always has been a pleasure for me. AINA now has 11 new members plus one new Life-Member. A fun thing we did at the Table was having the Jerusalem T-Shirt drawing. The winner's name was drawn at the conclusion of the convention; John Bunge of Colorado Springs was the winner (the T-shirt was mailed to him afterwards).

The AINA General Membership Meeting was very well attended. It was an honor, as always, to have as our special guests, General Manager Raphael Jehudai and Deputy Managing Director, Yossef Attali, from the Israel Government Coins and Medals Corporation. Each of them gave greetings from Israel and from the IGCM. Bill Rosenblum gave an impromptu short talk about the numismatic connection between the State of Colorado and the State of Israel, and named several prominent persons from Israel who had lived in Colorado at one time. The main speaker was Simcha Kuritzky, "Classic Hebrew Amulets" his topic. His color slide presentation was very informative and most interesting.

I tried my best to be the "unofficial photographer" for this story but not all good intentions come to pass. My picture of Bill and Rita Rosenblum came out blurry and for that I apologize (should have taken two), and the day spent with our friends from the IGCM, including dinner later that evening, I discovered that I had left my camera at the hotel, so no pictures of them (I will get their pictures next summer in Milwaukee).

All in all, I think the convention itself was a success and I know that it was completely successful for AINA: we have 12 new members; we have 2 new Board Members, we have members who are enthusiastic about doing certain projects that are needed to keep AINA up-to-date, and we have a full Board of Directors and slate of Officers who are eager and willing to do whatever is necessary to keep AINA an active and vibrant organization, just as it always has been and hopefully just as it always will be in the future for many years to come.







# THE JUDAICA NOTGELD OF STERNBERG

It is estimated that the numbers of different varieties of German Notgeld is in the tens of thousands. There are perhaps a couple dozen notgeld notes, issued in Germany by cities, towns or municipalities which have been classified as Jewish. While some were issued by Jewish individuals for hotels or restaurants there are others of anti-Semitic character that suggest the calamities that had fallen on the region were the results of Jewish influence. Indeed, throughout history, the Jew was made out to be the villains on most cases.

The three notes tell the story of a very early Jewish pogrom in Sternberg, a small town in the former dukedom of Mecklenburg in Northern Germany, which happened 1492. In that year a catholic priest, Peter Daene, secretly sold some sacred wafers (hostien- the corpus christi) to some Jews. This act was seen by the church as a severe sacrilege and is illustrated in note # 1. The Jews took them to a party and were about to eat them. When they cut their knives into the hostiens a miracle happened -blood began flowing out of them -the holy blood. See note #2.. The Jews were then accused by the bishop and the duke of the sin of desecration. In punishment twenty-seven of them (25 men and 2 women) were condemned to death and burned at he stake. See note #3). All the other Jews who lived in the dukedom were expelled and had to leave Mecklenburg.

A chapel was built at the place where the miracle of the holy blood happened. As a result Sternberg became one of the most famous and richest places of pilgrimage in northern Germany. A place where pilgrims could buy forgiveness of their sins.

Today historians are more or less convinced that the Duke and the higher churchmen just needed some false pretenses to get rid of the Jews, because they were up to their ears in debts. The creditors were the Jews, for at that time they were the only moneylenders. For Christians, all money lending for interest was seen by the church as a severe sin.





## Baron Maurice de Hirsch

Maurice de Hirsch was a German philanthropist who was born at Munich on December 9, 1831. His mother, née Caroline Wertheimer of Frankfort, took care that he should have the best instruction in Hebrew and religion. His mind was very alert and quick of comprehension, but he did not possess the disposition of the student. In 1855 Hirsch married Clara, eldest daughter of Senator Raphael Bischoffsheim of the firm of Bischoffsheim & Goldschmidt at Brussels, which had branches in London and Paris.

Though only a clerk he soon became the master mind of this great international banking-house. Still, although he was the son-in-law of the senior member of the house, he never became a partner, for he was regarded as too enterprising and aggressive in his plans to suit the conservative ideas of the heads of the firm. Having inherited from his father and grandfather a considerable fortune, which was largely augmented by his wife's dowry, he embarked in railway enterprises on his own account in Austria, in the Balkans, and in Russia.

A Brussels banking-firm which had secured from the Turkish government concessions for building a railway through the Balkans to Constantinople, was unable to carry the project through. Hirsch obtained control of these concessions, went to Constantinople, and, after tireless effort, succeeded in having them amended and renewed. This done, he formed a construction company and perfected arrangements for the building of this important railway, which was to connect Europe and the near East. The project was not looked upon with favor, but Baron Hirsch clearly saw its commercial value and advantages, won over sufficient cooperation, and personally superintended the enterprise, after having summoned the most skilful railway engineers of Europe to his assistance.

Until he had finished the railway, which, unlike previous Turkish enterprises, proved to be a great financial success, Hirsch was regarded as rather visionary and reckless. The substantial success which he achieved contrary to the predictions of conservative bankers, gained for him the reputation of being one of the leading captains of industry and financiers of Europe.

In the course of his strenuous business preoccupation in connection with his railway-building, he became acquainted with the deplorable condition of the Jews in the Orient, which condition was due chiefly to a lack of practical education and of opportunities to earn a livelihood. He secured the services of Emanuel Veneziani, who made investigations for



him and became an administrator of his munificence. Hirsch was impressed with the excellent educational work and benevolent services rendered by the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and placed large sums at its disposal to enable it to extend its work in European Turkey. In 1873 he gave the Alliance 1,000,000 francs for the creation of schools, and from 1880 till his death he undertook to make up the annual deficit of the Alliance, which amounted each year to several hundred thousand francs. At the same time he encouraged the Alliance to establish trade-schools, the entire expense of which from 1878 until his death he paid. In 1889 he consolidated his annual donations in a foundation which yielded an annual income of 400,000 francs. In 1878, during the Russo-Turkish war, he established and maintained hospitals for both armies, and sent the Empress of Russia £40,000 for charitable purposes.

Deplorable as was the status of the Jews in Galicia, Turkey, and the Balkans, their condition was not to be compared with that of their coreligionists in Russia, who suffered untold hardships under measures calculated to deprive them of every possible means of earning a respectable livelihood. In 1885 Hirsch, with the assistance of a commission, drew up a scheme for improving the condition of the Russian Jews. It was his idea at this period that that object might be best attained by measures applied in Russia itself, without resorting to emigration. For the preliminary endowment of this scheme he offered the Russian government 50,000,000 francs to be used for purposes of education. This offer the government declined to accept unless the fund be entrusted to it for exclusive control and distribution.

Hirsch finally but reluctantly came to the conclusion that, in view of this disposition on the part of the Russian government, the only hopeful plan of relief for the Russian Jew lay in emigration. He therefore directed all his energies to investigating and studying the best plans of colonization, which resulted in the formation of an international association, incorporated under English laws and known as the Jewish Colonization Association. The nominal capital, which was contributed entirely by Hirsch, was £2,000,000, all of which save a hundred shares he retained in his own hands as trustee. The purposes of the association, as stated by Hirsch himself, were: "To assist and promote the emigration of Jews from any part of Europe or Asia—and principally from countries in which they may for the time being be subjected to any special taxes or political or other disabilities—to any parts of the world, and to form and establish colonies in various parts of North and South America and other countries, for agricultural, commercial, and other purposes."



Immediately after the formation of the association he addressed an appeal to the Jews of Russia with regard to the scheme of emigration which he intended to carry out, urging them to assist him by obeying certain necessary prescribed regulations, so that their emigration should not be headlong and reckless and end in failure. He reminded them that he could do nothing without the support of the Russian government; that they should bear their burdens patiently, as at first the number of emigrants would have to be limited, but that as time progressed the emigration could assume larger proportions.

Baron de Hirsch was a great believer in the regeneration of the Russian Jews through industrial pursuits, and especially through agriculture, from which occupations they had been barred in Russia. With this object in view he caused careful inquiries and investigations to be made in countries that offered suitable lands for agricultural development. He sent agents to make investigations in various parts of America—in Brazil, Mexico, Canada, and Argentina. Through the agency of Dr. Löwenthal, who was chiefly entrusted with these inquiries, he came to the conclusion that Argentina, in the first instance, presented conditions most favorable for the commencement of the plan of colonization. Large tracts of land were purchased in Buenos Ayres, Sante Fé, and Entre-Rios.

The Russian government, which had rejected the baron's offer for the amelioration of the condition of the Jews in the empire, cooperated with him in the organization of a system of emigration. A central committee, selected by the baron, was formed in St. Petersburg, at the head of which were Barons Horace and David Günzburg, together with S. Poliakoff, M. Sack, Passower, and Raffalovich, the latter three being distinguished members of the St. Petersburg bar. The baron also formed a governing body in Argentina; and the personal direction of the colonies was entrusted to Col. Albert Goldsmid, who obtained temporary leave of absence from the English War Office for the purpose.

The gigantic plan of colonization thus initiated met with the usual percentage of failure and success attending such enterprises. Baron de Hirsch continued to give his personal attention to every detail of this great work, and organized a regular business staff, which attended him wherever he was residing, in Paris or in London. The first floor of his residence was converted into a business bureau, where he regularly spent the morning hours receiving reports and dictating his correspondence.

The large number of Russian Jews who emigrated to the United States attracted his benevolent interest; and in 1891 he caused to be organized under the laws of the state of New York the Baron de Hirsch Fund, with a capital of \$2,500,000, which was afterward increased.



Since Hirsch lived the greater part of his life in Austria, it was quite natural that the deplorable condition of the Jews in that empire should especially appeal to him. In 1889, after consultation with Dr. Adolf Jellinek of Vienna, he formulated a plan to aid the Jews of Galicia. The objects of his proposed foundation, which was to commemorate the forty years' jubilee of the reign of Emperor Francis Joseph (1888), were stated to be as follows: 1. The establishment of primary schools and of children's recreation-grounds in Galicia and Bukowina. 2. The granting of subsidies to teachers. 3. The providing of school-books and other educational requirements and of clothing and food for pupils. 4. The granting of subsidies for the establishment of schools for Jewish children. 5. The apprenticing of Jewish youths to handicraftsmen and agriculturists. 6. The granting of assistance to Jewish pupils at commercial and professional schools. 7. The granting of loans, free of interest, to artisans and agriculturists. 8. The establishment of commercial, technical, and agricultural schools. In 1891 the Austrian government agreed to the plan; and the baron thereupon placed 12,000,000 francs at the disposal of the trustees.

The foregoing are only a few of the benevolent foundations made by the baron. In addition may be mentioned the Canadian Baron de Hirsch Fund, and the large sums given to London hospitals, to which he also devoted the entire proceeds of his winnings on the turf. He always said that his horses ran for charity. It is impossible to form an accurate estimate of the amount of money Baron de Hirsch devoted to benevolent purposes. That, including the large legacy (amounting to \$45,000,000) left to the Jewish Colonization Association, it exceeded \$100,000,000 is an estimate justified by the amounts given by him from time to time to the foundations already referred to. There were, besides, many gifts to individuals of which there is no record. In an article referring to his charitable work he said: "In relieving human suffering I never ask whether the cry of necessity comes from a being who belongs to my faith or not; but what is more natural than that I should find my highest purpose in bringing to the followers of Judaism, who have been oppressed for a thousand years, who are starving in misery, the possibilities of a physical and moral regeneration?"

The baron was a remarkable man, gifted with extraordinary powers, with a genius for large affairs, which was displayed even in a higher degree in his gigantic plans for the exodus of the Russian Jews than in the amassing of his great fortune. He loved pleasure, but disliked vanity. He was not endowed with sentiment, nor was he religious in the ordinary sense. His ideals were all merged in his devotion to his far-reaching, carefully planned scheme of benevolence.



In 1887, when he lost his only child, his son Lucian, a gifted and promising young man of thirty, he said in reply to a message of sympathy: "My son I have lost, but not my heir; humanity is my heir." No appeals made to him—and there were many—to endow some great institution in France, or to erect some artistic public building to perpetuate his name and family, ever induced him to turn aside from his plans for effecting the emigration of the Russian Jews and converting them into agricultural communities. He was firmly convinced that as the Jews were originally an agricultural and pastoral people, they, and especially those in Russia, would under favorable conditions again become tillers of the soil.

In an article contributed by the baron to the "Forum," Aug., 1891, he set forth his views and purposes as follows: "In the lands where Jews have been permitted to acquire landed property, where they have found opportunity to devote themselves to agriculture, they have proved themselves excellent farmers. For example, in Hungary they form a very large part of the tillers of the soil; and this fact is acknowledged to such an extent that the high Catholic clergy in Hungary almost exclusively have Jews as tenants on mortmain properties, and almost all large landholders give preference to the Jews on account of their industry, their rectitude, and their dexterity. These are facts that can not be hid, and that have force; so that the anti-Semitic movement, which for a long time flourished in Hungary, must expire. It will expire because every one sees that so important a factor in the productive activity of the country—especially in agriculture—can not be spared. My own personal experience, too, has led me to recognize that the Jews have very good ability in agriculture. I have seen this personally in the Jewish agricultural colonies of Turkey; and the reports from the expedition that I have sent to the Argentine Republic plainly show the same fact. These convictions led me to my activity to better the unhappy lot of the poor, downtrodden Jews; and my efforts shall show that the Jews have not lost the agricultural qualities that their forefathers possessed. I shall try to make for them a new home in different lands, where, as free farmers, on their own soil, they can make themselves useful to the country."

His particular concern was to avoid overcrowding with his Russian protégés the countries to which they might emigrate. Of his own accord, quite apart from restrictive laws, he took measures to regulate the exodus and to select men who would apply themselves to handicrafts and agriculture. He never tired of impressing upon his agents and upon the emigrants the importance of directing their energies in these channels exclusively, so that they should become a part of the sturdy yeomanry of the countries wherein they settled, and should "sit every man under his vine



and under his fig-tree." He realized that colonizing, like planting a forest, required time and patience. His hopes rested upon the second generation; he knew that the forty years in the wilderness might be shortened but not escaped. His idea was that as colonies became firmly rooted in different parts of the world, they would become self attracting, and would draw from Russia greater and greater numbers, so that in one or two generations Russia would materially suffer from the loss of the energy and activity of her Jews, and would either stop the exodus by according to those who remained full civil rights, or would fall, as she deserved, the logical victim of her own intolerance.



The illustration on the upper left side of the page is of a plaster galvano of the Baron De Hirsch medal created for the Medallion History of the Jewish People metallic series.

The rectangular plaque is from the collection in the Jewish Museum of New York's Great Jewish Portraits in Metal. The plaque was engraved by Ivan Sors.



# The Jewish Community of CHELM

Hope and optimism were always the characteristic traits of the Jewish community in Chelm. This is evidenced in the treasury of folklore which has made the name of Chelm famous. Even though it is now established that Chelm was in the nature of a fictitious creation of Jewish humor, there is no doubt that Chelm contributed much to Jewish folklore, always a way of consoling the despair and resignation which might have overwhelmed the Jewish mind oppressed by the hardships of Jewish life. Already in the olden days, Chelm was a place of renown and many historic writings speak with praise of the work of the Jewish community of Chelm, which occupied a central position amongst Jewish communities in Poland. Together with the famous Jewish centers such as Krakow, Posen and Lemberg, it was deeply rooted in the proud and creative Jewish settlement in Poland where there was Torah and learning, Chassidism, Messianic romanticism, deeply rooted Jewish tradition and active work in the world of the mind. In the field of Jewish industry, commerce and handicraft, as well as in the world of culture, Chelm played its great part.

The community of Chelm is considered one of the oldest in Poland, possibly dating from the 12th century, although the first recorded evidence of its existence is a tombstone dating from 1442. Jews of Chelm are mentioned as royal tax farmers from the end of the 15th century. R. Judah Aaron of Chelm, appointed tax farmer in 1520, was apparently also rabbi of the community. In 1522 he headed the communities in the districts of Lublin, Chelm, and Belz. The tax records for 1564 indicate that the Jews shouldered the major share of the town taxes.

Frequent disputes between Jews and Christians in Chelm on money matters were litigated in court. In 1580 and 1582 there were anti - Jewish outbreaks following incitement by the clergy. During the Chmielnicki massacres of 1648, 400 Jews perished in Chelm, probably including refugees from the surrounding areas. The few survivors were persecuted by the local populace and clergy, who attempted to dispossess the Jews of their property and abolish their legal rights.

The community had revived by the beginning of the 18th century, when Jews of Chelm took an important part in the export trade. The community numbered 1,500 in 1765, 1,902 in 1827, 2,493 in 1857 and approximately 15,000 (almost 50% of the town's population) in 1939. In addition to religious institutions it maintained an orphanage, an old - age home, a yeshivah, and a secondary school. Two Jewish weeklies were published in Chelm during the 1920s and '30s.

On Sept. 14, 1939 the Soviet Army occupied Chelm but withdrew two weeks later in accordance with the Soviet - German agreement. At least several hundred young Jews also left the town during the Soviet army's withdrawal. The German army took over the city on Oct. 7, 1939, and immediately initiated a series of pogroms in which scores of Jews lost their lives. On December 1, 1,800 Jewish men between the ages of 15 and 60 were driven in a death march to the Soviet - held town of Sokal. Enroute 1,400 of the men were shot, and the 400 survivors were allowed to enter Sokal. The Jews in Chelm were forced to live in restricted quarters, but a closed ghetto was not established there.

In May 1941 about 2,000 Jews from Slovakia were deported to Chelm. The first mass deportation from Chelm took place on May 21 - 23, 1942, at which time 4,300 Jews (including all the deportees from Slovakia) were sent to the Sobibor death camp. On November 6, the entire Jewish population was dispatched in a final Aktion to Sobibor for extermination. Only a handful of workers were left in the town's prison; of these 15 survived and were liberated with the town on July 22, 1944. The Germans had destroyed all Jewish public buildings, among them the 700 - year - old synagogue. Most Jews who left for the Soviet Union in 1939 joined the Soviet or Polish armies.

These days Chelm is annihilated and gone. The houses are empty, without a Jewish soul, and the very streets have become a Jewish cemetery, saturated with the blood of Jewish martyrs, who have bequeathed a silent Will: "When we are led to the slaughter, may our souls remain!"



The illustration is of a 2 zloty coin of Poland, the ninth coin in the series of Historical Cities issued in 2006.



# A Zionist Amulet?

By Simcha Kuritzky, NLG

Generally there is a sharp distinction between the Age of Superstition and the Age of Reason. Political Zionism belongs to the Age of Reason, built on the modern concept of nationalism and using the latest agricultural techniques. There was no real attempt to integrate or even accommodate both folklore and science until the 1970s. Or was there?

The first great success of the Zionist Organization was the San Remo Treaty of 1920, which endorsed the creation of a Jewish national homeland. This made concrete the promises of British Premier Lord Balfour (whose famous declaration contradicted existing agreements with France on the future of Turkish possessions). The Dutch Zionist Association issued a medal to commemorate this event. Haffner's catalog lists it as EP-13.

When I examined this medal for an exhibit, I noticed three peculiarities. First, the date on the medal is Iyar 6, 5680 (April 24, 1920) and not Iyar 10 as erroneously reported in Haffner's catalog. The *vov* is definitely too large to be a *yod* (it almost looks like a *resh*).

Second, the *heh* in the year is disproportionately large. It is unusual that there is *heh* (signifying five thousand years) at all, as the thousands were generally assumed. The first Israel medal to show a thousands indicator was the Israel Liberated medal of 1958, but that used Hebrew years for events separated by almost two millennia. Israel did not use the thousands indicator on circulating or commemorative coins until the early 1980s. So one possibility is that the *heh* is large simply to signify that it stands for five thousand and not just five. Another possibility is that it is large (and placed prominently at the center of the inscription) because it is a pun on *Hashem*, the Name of God, frequently used in written prayers and on amulets. In fact, in the early Twentieth Century, it was still quite common for West European Jews to place on newborns amulets with only a *heh* inscribed thereon. One such amulet appears in Schrire's book on Hebrew Amulets, and a number of love tokens have been found with such an inscription.

Third, the rest of the year is not given in its standard sequence. Normally, the letters are arranged from largest to smallest, so 680 would be *tav resh peh*. Instead, they are presented in the opposite sequence, spelling the

word *Porat*. While *Porat* has a number of positive meanings, such as being fertile, it is also used prominently on one of the most common amuletic inscriptions (Genesis 49:22), which begins *Ben Porat Yosef* (a fruitful bough is Joseph). This blessing by Israel is commonly used to keep away the Evil Eye, based on Talmud Berakhot 20a.

There are other possible explanations. The medal designer could have chosen to spell out the year as *haporat* (the fruitful) rather than the more usual form which spells out *taraf* (literally, to tear, but also means not kosher since the Bible describes animals who are torn or killed by wild beasts as unsuitable for human consumption), though that doesn't explain the large *heh*. However, I think it most likely the designer was familiar with and influenced by amulets. Since these medals were looped so they could be worn as jewelry, they actually serve the dual use as amulets and as a modern political statement.





## PROFILE OF THE "MIGHTY MOE"

We fondly remember Moe Weinschel, the immediate past president of AINA, as a very bright and intelligent human being. He was born and raised in New York, where he joined the Navy following high school. He was lucky enough to be stationed in the area of Brooklyn and Coney Island, working in security as a member of the Shore Patrol. It was during this time, approximately 1942, that he met and married Aida. They had two boys and a girl and lived in Rockaway Park (Moe and Aida had been married nearly 60 years when Moe passed away on October 16, 2001). Being a member of the Shore Patrol while in the Navy gave Moe the knowledge and experience needed for his very first job following his discharge after the war. He worked in transit security for the Triboro Bridge Authority for a number of years, followed by owning and operating a service station. He finally found his niche in the business world and began to sell insurance until he finally retired. He even worked with J. J. Van Grover helping him in his coin business for a couple of years.

Moe was active in many organizations other than numismatic ones. He was a member and former officer of the Jewish War Veterans (it was members of this group that were the Honor Guard at his Services). Moe was also very active in his Synagogue where he led prayers, read from the Torah and blew the Shofar on holidays.

Family and friends were very important to Moe but also important to him was being a numismatist. Moe was a member of and active in several organizations as well as their conventions and was recognized numerous times for his many years of service and hard work. He was one of the earliest recipients of the Ambassador Award sponsored by Krause Publications and was also the recipient of countless other awards from AINA, the ANA, TAMS and other numismatic organizations. To name a few, he received from the ANA the Presidential Award, the Medal of Merit, the Goodfellow Award and was recognized for his 50 years of membership at their convention in Philadelphia; and from TAMS, the Ben & Sylvia Odesser Memorial Award. He loved the YN's and if he wasn't trying to talk like Donald Duck to them, he was telling them a story (Moe and Julie Turoff were always telling stories at the conventions, during the day and always in the evenings). Moe took an active part in just about every coin club and coin convention in the Metropolitan New York area and he represented AINA many times at the FUN Conventions in Florida as well as at the ANA Conventions wherever they were being held.

Moe had quite a variety in his collections: historical events, tokens and medals, 1<sup>st</sup> Day Covers, PNC's, Palestine Mandate coins and almost anything and everything connected with Israel. Moe joined AINA shortly after it was founded and became LM #36. He assumed the presidency upon the passing of the late

Morris Bram. He led many of the AINA conventions as general chairman, even as the auctioneer twice, and organized and led 12 of the AINA Study Tours to Israel (I was a tour member in 1994) and he stayed in constant contact with the Directors (he called me nearly every weekend) and officials of the IGCM.

Writing this story about Moe certainly brought back many fond memories I have of the Mighty Moe, a nickname he was known by for many years. Looking through my two albums of pictures from the AINA Tour in 1994 to find the right picture to include with this story certainly brought back a flood of loving memories and wishes for the 'good old days'. Although I had several pictures with Moe in them, none were the right one except for the one shown below. This picture shows Moe and Aida, Florence and Ed Schuman, J. J. Van Grover and myself (of course my eyes are closed) at the farewell dinner in Tel Aviv, just hours prior to our departure back to the States. And so to Moe, my dear friend and colleague, you are sorely missed and I thank you for all the memories that have flooded my mind while writing this Profile of you, the Mighty Moe. Shalom.

*Written by Donna J. Sims, NLG*





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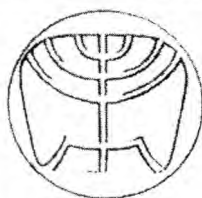
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**Reverse (Face Value Side):** Gideon Sagi and Moshe Pereg



Cat. No.	Metal and Finish	Face Value	Mint Mark	Diameter	Weight	Maximum Mintage
31735300	Gold/917 22k, Proof	NIS 10	"מ" (Mem)	30mm	16.96g	555
21735380	Silver/925 Proof	NIS 2	"מ" (Mem)	38.7mm	28.8g	2,800
21735300	Silver/925Proof-like	NIS 1	Star of David	30mm	14.4g	1,800
71735331	Set of the 3 above coins					
71735222	Set of the 2 silver coins					

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